

## **Introduction**

I think it is ironic that today is called Good Friday while the Friday after Thanksgiving is called black Friday. The Friday of Jesus’s crucifixion is indeed good for Christians. It is perhaps called Good as a synonym for Holy, but had we been there, it would have been the blackest and bleakest day of our lives. And yet we can call to mind the assurance God gives to all who love him: “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” “All things” includes every experience of your life if you are called according to his purpose. And “all things” includes the bleakest and blackest Friday, the day on which Jesus was crucified.

Tonight as we return in our minds to consider and remember Good Friday, I want us to think together about the burial of Christ. The burial of Jesus is often overlooked as to its importance, but I think how the Apostle Paul drew attention to Christ’s burial in his statement of the gospel which he wrote to the Corinthians. We find in 1 Corinthians 15 the gospel Paul preached: “that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” and that afterward he appeared to Peter, Paul and over 500 disciples at one time. The burial is right there in the midst of the gospel message. It deserves our attention tonight.

[Read Text and Pray]

The significance of the burial of Christ is often overlooked, but tonight I hope you come away from the consideration of this text with a deep appreciation for its significance. Everything about the burial of Jesus was just right. His burial was performed . . .

### **I. At The Right Time (57)**

A. Matthew tells that the time was evening. “When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea.”

This detail is not incidental. For the Jews evening began at about 3 pm and lasted to 6. Six pm marked the beginning of the next day.

Now Jesus had declared to an evil generation looking for a sign that the only sign that would be given it was the sign of the prophet Jonah—that as Jonah was three days in the belly of the great fish, so would the Son of Man be three days in the heart of the earth. He said he would rise on the third day. So for Friday to count as a day in the heart of the earth, Jesus would have had to have been buried BEFORE 6 pm. It was shortly after 3 pm that Jesus cried out and yielded up his spirit. And so it was that when it was evening, after 3 and yet before 6, Joseph came and buried Jesus' s body. It was at just the right time.

## **II. By the Right Man (57)**

The first detail Matthew provides for us about Joseph of Arimathea is that he was rich. He was a wealthy man. He had come to be a disciple of Jesus, although he was not yet to this point public in his identity with Christ. Joseph was a member of the Jewish Council, but he had not consented to its evil plan. So at this time, Joseph had the standing to be able to approach Pilate and ask for the body of Jesus. He also had the resources to be able to care for the body of Jesus. But most importantly he plays, no doubt, an unwitting role, in fulfilling prophecy that goes back to Isaiah.

Isaiah 53 clearly speaks of the sufferings of Jesus as the Suffering servant of the Lord. On Him the Lord laid our iniquity. He was stricken for the transgression of God's people. And in verse 9 of Isaiah 53, the prophet said, "And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death." The New American Standard puts it this way, "His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in his death." Who could have known exactly what this prophecy could mean until it was fulfilled? In some way the servant's grave would be assigned with wicked men and yet he would be with A rich man. Here is how. Generally speaking the victims of crucifixion, when they were taken down from their crosses, were disposed of in a common grave for the wicked—for CRIMINALS. That would be the grave to which they were ASSIGNED. But the assignment was overturned because of the intervention of Joseph of Arimathea. He came and sought the body, and so instead of being thrown

into the grave of wicked men, Jesus was with a rich man in his death. Isn't that amazing? Jesus was buried by the right man.

### **III. In the Right Place (60)**

The right place for Jesus' burial was in a tomb. In a tomb was in the belly of death. And in a tomb was in the heart of the earth. Again Jesus had prophesied that as Jonah and been in the belly of the great fish so he would be in the heart of the earth—that is BURIED. The tomb was the place in which Jesus was buried. He was in the heart of the earth in the tomb. He was now as low as a man can go in an earthly sense.

Now think about this. Jesus's work was to address our sin and the curse of sin. And thinking back to the curse God pronounced on Adam in the wake of the Fall, we recall these words: "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the GROUND (the earth); for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). Christ tasted death even to the point of descending into the earth. He tasted the depths of our curse, and yet he was not overcome by it. And all those in Christ will not be overcome by decay either. I love Paul's instruction about the Christian's union with Christ: "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Burial is a subjection to the fulness of death/the depths of death, and that is how far Christ went to free us from it.

There is another point to ponder connected with the fact that Jesus was buried in the right place. The right place was not simply a tomb but the new tomb of a rich man and one in which no one else had yet been laid. Rather than the burial of a common man, Jesus's burial was in the company of a man of high esteem and wealth. Now stop and think about that. When Jesus was born, Mary laid him in a lowly manger. He grew up in the pauper's town of Nazareth. He had nowhere to lay his head. He was crucified as criminal. But now he is buried as a royal. This burial is striking! This royal burial directs us to a turning point in the humiliation of Jesus. Now that he has humbled himself to the point of death, his downward trajectory has been reversed. Jesus humbled himself to the point of death on a cross, and already his ascension to the place of highest regard and

worship has begun. His humiliation is complete. Now the honor of which he is worthy is beginning to be displayed. You and I look at a tomb and we see a place of death, a place of man's ultimate defeat. But when we look at the tomb in which Jesus was placed, we see the emblem of victory; we see the foreshadowing of his exaltation to the throne which bears the name, King of Kings and Lord of Lords before he even rises from the dead!

#### **IV. Before the Right Onlookers (61)**

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there sitting opposite the tomb. They were looking on as Joseph prepared the body and buried Jesus. I say these were the right onlookers because they were the two who would be granted the blessing of first learning of the empty tomb on Sunday morning.

These two women simply would not leave Jesus, even after his spirit was gone and all that remained was the empty shell of his body. The night was at its darkest, so to speak, but they just would not part up until his body was in the tomb and the stone was rolled in place. They are such a testimony to us of steadfastness. You and I know Jesus is risen. We know he has won. We know he is returning. But sometimes the sun goes down on us in life. Things for which we wish or anticipate and things for which we labor, things for which we pray, but night falls on those hopes. Remember this is a sin cursed world. But I can tell you this. The blessed hope of hopes will not be stopped. The light may grow dim and times become hard, but hoping in Christ will never be futile.

Peter prepared us for such days. He wrote that "scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.'" He later says, "But according to his promise we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." Do not give up on Jesus! And do not give up on God's working all things for good in your life if you belong to Him and are called according to his purpose.

#### **V. With the Right Security Measures**

Joseph rolled a great stone in front of the tomb and went away. This act secured the body from thieves and from animals and birds. And then there

was an added layer of security. Of course it did not come from Joseph but from the enemies of the Lord. The Jewish Council wanted to make certain that Jesus's disciples did not steal the body and claim that he had risen on the third day. They wanted to prevent a hoax. So on Saturday, at Pilate's direction, they took a guard of soldiers and went to seal and secure the tomb. Thank you Jewish council! Thank you! What you did just insured that it would in fact be logically impossible to deny the resurrection of Jesus. You helped insure that the disciples would not steal the body and make a false claim. You helped insure that if the body of Jesus did disappear it would only be because he actually did rise from the dead.

## **Conclusion**

And so you see the burial of Jesus is not something we can afford to overlook. It is and was according to the Scriptures. It fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah and the prophecy of Jesus himself. It points us to the beginning of the exaltation of Christ. And it depicts the relationship Christians now have to sin. We are dead to it.

Finally, it just assures us that Jesus really did die. He would not have been removed from the cross had he not actually been dead. And he died for sinners in order to rescue us from the wrath of God our sins deserve. If you are believing in Christ tonight, thank him; praise him; bless him; and live for him with the same perseverance demonstrated by the Mary's.

It is possible even likely that some of you are here to observe a cultural holiday and you really know very little of Jesus. Before he was buried, Jesus Christ was humbling himself to the point of death on a cross to become the Passover lamb in the place of sinners. And he calls all those who are oppressed by sin, who bear the weight, the burden, the guilt of your sin against God. He calls you to leave your sin and turn to him for rest, for forgiveness, for cleansing. The Philippian jailer ran to Paul and Silas and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved!" If you would turn to Jesus and trust in him, this will truly be Good Friday for you.

## **Prayer**

## **Benediction**

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. May he grant you peace, rejoicing, and heart to believe in him if you do not already. And if you do, then may he grant that you stand in awe of him to the praise of his glorious grace.